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Viewing cable 09BAKU169, IRANIAN SCHOOLTEACHER RELATES STUDENT PROTESTS AND

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Understanding cables

Every cable message consists of three parts:

- The top box shows each cable's unique reference number, when and by whom it originally was sent, and what its initial classification was.
- The middle box contains the header information that is associated with the cable. It includes information about the receiver(s) as well as a general subject.
- The bottom box presents the body of the cable. The opening can contain a more specific subject, references to other cables ([browse by origin](#) to find them) or additional comment. This is followed by the main contents of the cable: a summary, a collection of specific topics and a comment section.

To understand the justification used for the classification of each cable, please use this [WikiSource](#) article as reference.

Discussing cables

If you find meaningful or important information in a cable, please link directly to its unique reference number. Linking to a specific paragraph in the body of a cable is also possible by copying the appropriate link (to be found at the paragraph symbol). Please mark messages for social networking services like Twitter with the hash tags **#cablegate** and a hash containing the reference ID e.g. **#09BAKU169**.

Reference ID	Created	Released	Classification	Origin
09BAKU169	2009-03-04 08:52	2011-08-30 01:44	CONFIDENTIAL	Embassy Baku

Appears in these articles:

<http://www.mcclatchydc.com/2011/04/17/112290/state-department-cables-reveal.html>

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VZCZCXRO8910
RR RUEHBC RUEHDE RUEHDIR RUEHKUK
DE RUEHKB #0169/01 0630852
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
R 040852Z MAR 09
FM AMEMBASSY BAKU
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 0855
INFO RUCNIRA/IRAN COLLECTIVE
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC
RHMFISS/CDR USCENCOM MACDILL AFB FL
RHMFISS/CDR USEUCOM VAHINGEN GE
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHINGTON DC
RUEKDIA/DIA WASHDC
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BAKU 000169

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 3/3/2019
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [SCUL](#) [SNAR](#) [AJ](#) [IR](#)
SUBJECT: IRANIAN SCHOOLTEACHER RELATES STUDENT PROTESTS AND
AFTERMATH

Classified By: POLECON COUNSELOR ROB GARVERICK, REASONS 1.4 (B and D)

Summary

¶1. (C) An Iranian schoolteacher from XXXXXXXXXXXX told Iran Watcher that the vast majority of Iranians (but not necessarily the regime) want good relations with the United States, though most are too caught up with their daily problems to focus on this. She described Iranian intellectuals as "controlled" and "voiceless." She described the strict restrictions on teachers and students in Iranian schools, noting that teachers are required to report any students who showed signs of criticism or dissent from the official line, "otherwise both student and teacher will be punished." She recounted in detail massive student protests in Tabriz in 2006, during which thousands of protesters demanded the right to use the Azeri language in schools and offices, and to have some courses taught in Azeri. She said that hundreds were arrested, and claimed that the authorities required parents to pay fines of 10,000 or 20,000 dollars per child (depending on social class) to obtain release of their kids. Suspected student leadership figures are still in prison, she added. Noting the shrewdness of this and other regime tactics, she dolefully observed that "Iran will never be changed from within." For those who can, emigration to the West is an answer; many of those who can't turn to cynicism and/or narcotics. End Summary.

Iranians Want Good Relations With the USA...

¶2. (C) XXXXXXXXXXXX, a recently retired Iranian middle-school teacher from XXXXXXXXXXXX, met with Baku Iran watcher on February 26, shortly before departing for a visit to her sister in the United States (her first visit there). Echoing comments we have heard from many other Iranians, she asserted that "ninety percent" of Iranians want good relations with the United States; "only the regime doesn't want this," she said. She averred that "most Iranians are caught up in the challenges of their daily life and don't think much about politics." She described sentiments within her own extended family of ten well-educated adults as illustrative "some say it's best to be apolitical, some say we should focus on ways to use the system to our advantage and make money, some say

the current situation is terrible and will never improve, and we should emigrate."

But Are Largely Voiceless

13. (C) XXXXXXXXXXXX described the Iranian intellectual class as "controlled," "frustrated," and "voiceless." "Nobody in Iran has a free voice," she asserted. She noted that she taught history, literature, and geography "but was never able to express alternative opinions or tolerate open discussions by students...those who speak out are beaten." Her lectures and reading materials were approved in advance, and any sharp questioning or challenge by students of the material she taught had to be reported "or I would be punished." She added that any critical or untoward statements or sentiments expressed openly by students could lead to punishment of both teacher and student.

A Student Protest, and its Repression

14. (C) XXXXXXXXXXXX described the outbreak of widespread student protests in Tabriz and other towns in 2006 as illuminating both continued dissatisfaction and independent thought among students, and the authorities shrewd and ruthless tactics in suppressing it. She explained that although the protests were sparked by the appearance in a Tehran newspaper depicting a cockroach speaking in Azeri (vice Persian), they rapidly evolved in to demands for permission for the use in conversation of the Azeri language in Iranian Azerbaijan schools and offices, and the teaching of Azeri (as well as Farsi), and its use in some courses. According to XXXXXXXXXXXX, several thousand students joined these protests, which continued for several days before being violently repressed.

15. (C) She said that several hundred high school and middle school students were arrested, including many from her school. She said that those arrested were divided by the authorities into three categories: Leader/organizers, middle-class and above "followers," and lower class/poor "followers." According to XXXXXXXXXXXX, most of the suspected leaders/organizers were subjected to harsh treatment and remain imprisoned to this day. Families of middle class "followers" were told that their children would not be released until fines of approximately \$20 thousand dollars per child were paid. Families of lower class and poor families were told they must pay approximately \$10 thousand dollars each to free their children.

16. (C) XXXXXXXXXXXX said that these fines placed a huge economic burden on many families, some of whom had to sell their homes and valued possessions in order to raise the necessary funds: "Tabriz was full of parents going crazy trying to borrow money." She opined that this was an effective means of student repression "as the students feel guilty for the punishment they have caused for their families," and the parents urge them not to get involved in politics again.

Hopes for Emigration, Nostalgia For The Shah

17. (C) XXXXXXXXXXXX said flatly that, as a result of shrewd repression tactics, a climate of fear, and constant propaganda, Iranian society is "brainwashed," and "impossible to change from within." Emigration is the answer for many of those who can, she said, while those who can't become cynical opportunists or sink into fatalism and/or self-indulgence. She blamed this atmosphere for what she depicted as high and rising narcotics use "much greater than during the days of the Shah." She expressed deep regret for the Shah's departure, adding that "many of us think that you took him away from us." She commented positively on recent BBC productions on the Shah, which she had watched (Note: Presumably she saw these in Iran, but that was not made clear. End Note).

18. (C) XXXXXXXXXXXX son is XXXXXXXXXXXX currently fulfilling his military service. While doctors are very respected, she noted that income is low and professional jealousies and restrictions common. She said that her son intends to emigrate to Canada, the U.S. or elsewhere in the West as soon as possible after finishes this service. XXXXXXXXXXXX promised to contact Iran watcher for a further meeting when she next returns to Baku.

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